



# Florida House of Representatives

## Representative Ben Diamond

### House District 68

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September 12, 2019

Dr. Steven Currall  
President, University of South Florida  
4202 E. Fowler Avenue, CGS 401  
Tampa, Florida 33620

Dear President Currall:

Congratulations on your new position as President of the University of South Florida. I look forward to meeting you and welcoming you to our community. You have a wonderful opportunity to lead a University on the rise. I could not be more excited to welcome you and I appreciate your leadership.

Because USF St. Petersburg is located in my district, USF St Petersburg's continued success is especially important to me. That is why I must express my concern with the preliminary blueprint for consolidation presented this week to the University's Board of Trustees. I am concerned that the preliminary plan does not follow the recommendations proposed by the legislatively-created Consolidation Planning Study and Implementation Task Force (the "Task Force"). As you know, the Task Force spent many months considering the input of students, faculty and community leaders. The Task Force recommended that the branch campuses maintain their distinct identities. The Task Force further recommended that branch campuses continue to retain the academic authority to make hiring and budget decisions. The preliminary plan appears to depart from these important recommendations.

I am also concerned that the preliminary plan does not comport with the letter or intent of House Bill 7071, which was signed into law by the Governor of Florida in June. Florida law defines "branch campuses" as having their own "faculty and administrative or supervisory organization" and "budgetary and hiring authority." Fla. Stat. 1004.335(7). The preliminary plan proposes that the regional chancellors would only have authority over "non-academic budgets." But the mission of a university is an academic one. To only grant the regional chancellors' authority over "non-academic"

budgetary and personnel issues does not comply with the provisions defining a branch campus in F.S. 1004.335 (7).

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in advance of the upcoming legislative session to discuss these concerns, which I shared with my colleagues in the Pinellas County legislative delegation meeting this morning. I have heard great things about your leadership and vision for our University, and I am confident that through further dialogue you and other leaders at the University will give additional consideration to these issues. USF St Petersburg has been an integral part of the City of St Petersburg's remarkable renaissance. My goal, I know, is the same as yours: that USF St Petersburg will continue to be in the best position to ensure a bright future for its students, our University as a whole, and our community.

Thank you for your consideration President Currall, and I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,



Ben Diamond

Cc: Mark Walsh, USF System Assistant Vice President for Government Relations  
Representative Chris Sprowls,  
Speaker Designate of the Florida House  
Chairman of the Pinellas County Legislative Delegation  
Senator Jeff Brandes, Vice Chairman of the Pinellas County Legislative Delegation  
Senator Ed Hooper  
Senator Daryl Rouson  
Representative Wengay Newton Sr.  
Representative Nick DiCeglie  
Representative Chris Latvala  
Representative Jennifer Webb  
Representative Jamie Grant

**Committee Assignments**

Judiciary Committee · Appropriations Committee  
Civil Justice Subcommittee · Insurance and Banking Subcommittee